

StoryCorps

Contact: StoryCorps Griot
Jo Flattery / Debra Carey / Gillian Kocher
Dan Klores Communications
(212) 685-4300

HISTORIC INITIATIVE TO PRESERVE THE STORIES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STORIES LAUNCHES AT MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

*StoryCorps' Griot Initiative Largest of Its Kind Ever Undertaken.
Will Record the Stories of Everyday African Americans in Cities Across the Nation.*

New York – (February 15, 2007) – StoryCorps, the acclaimed project to create an oral history of America, together with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), today launched **StoryCorps Griot** at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic site in Atlanta, Georgia.

The year-long initiative will gather and preserve the life stories of at least 1,750 African American families across the country. The Griot Initiative is the largest oral history project of its kind since 2,300 former slaves were interviewed in the mid-1930s as part of the WPA's Federal Writers Project. **StoryCorps Griot** is being launched in association with the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). It is the first major national collaboration for the museum which is expected to open in under a decade as the 19th museum of the Smithsonian Institution. In Atlanta, **StoryCorps Griot** will partner with public radio stations WABE and WCLK.

The "Griot" is part of a West African tradition of storytelling; a highly respected member of the tribe who acts as a living repository of births, deaths, marriages and significant events in the community. Griots are responsible not only for transmitting oral history through the generations, but also for ensuring that people find meaning in their own lives.

StoryCorps Griot builds on the success of StoryCorps, created in 2003 by award-winning radio documentary producer and MacArthur Fellow Dave Isay. For the **Griot Initiative**, a StoryCorps StoryBooth – a mobile recording studio – will make stops of up to six weeks in: **Atlanta; Newark; Detroit; Chicago; Oakland; Clarksdale, MS; Memphis; Selma and Montgomery.** Griot will partner with local public radio stations, historically black colleges and universities and other cultural institutions and membership organizations to celebrate the stories of African American families.

At the Griot StoryBooth, participants record their stories in pairs – oftentimes friends or loved ones – where one person interviews the other. A trained facilitator guides the participants through the interview process and handles the technical aspects of the recording. At the end of a forty-minute session, the participants are presented with a CD of their interview. This unprecedented effort to capture the recordings of African Americans will help ensure that their voices, experiences and life stories will be preserved and presented with dignity. The stories will

be archived for future generations at the American Folklife Center (AFC) at the Library of Congress and at the NMAAHC. Griot segments will air on the NPR news program “News and Notes,” the daily national one-hour series, hosted by journalist Farai Chideya. Locally, segments from StoryCorps Griot will be broadcast on WABE and WCLK.

Reservations for the Griot tour can be made by calling 800-850-4406 or visiting www.storycorpsgriot.net. Those interested in participating in StoryCorps Griot who do not live in Atlanta can review the schedule online to see when the tour will visit a city close to them.

“The Griot Initiative will bring the gift of StoryCorps to 1,750 African American families across the country, giving them the opportunity to honor loved ones, preserve their stories for generations to come, and educate the nation about the contributions of African Americans to the history of the nation,” said Isay. “Further, it continues our mission to teach people to become better listeners, foster intergenerational communication among families and communities, and help us to appreciate the strength in the stories of everyday people. It is a great privilege to be launching this tour from Atlanta, a focal point of African American life and history in this nation.”

“The Corporation for Public Broadcasting is pleased to support **StoryCorps Griot** on this historic tour that will honor the untold personal stories of African Americans in our country,” said Patricia de Stacy Harrison, CPB President and CEO. “We are proud to be a part of this important initiative as it seeks to not only find and record, but also celebrate the contributions of African Americans in our history. The Griot Initiative represents the essence of public broadcasting: high-quality, groundbreaking public service that informs, enlightens and inspires our populace.”

“Recording the rich and compelling stories of African Americans across this country is in perfect alignment with a key commitment of this museum which is to encourage all Americans to remember, to reflect and to celebrate our shared humanity,” said Lonnie G. Bunch, founding director of NMAAHC. “Through this unprecedented relationship we will ensure that the history of 20th century Black America will be preserved, understood and made accessible for years to come.”

“Storytelling is such an important tradition in the South,” said Milton Clipper, President and CEO of Public Broadcasting Atlanta (PBA), parent organization of WABE. “PBA, licensed to the Atlanta Public Schools, strongly believes in enriching the lives of our children, as well as our diverse communities through such compelling stories of African American history brought to us through **StoryCorps Griot**. With Griot, African American history is not filtered. Stories of struggle and happiness are told first hand. Indeed, with history-making projects such as **StoryCorps Griot**, value is added to the educational experience of our students, teachers and citizenry.”

Since April, 2005 StoryCorps tour has visited 56 towns and cities in 38 states, ranging from small towns to major urban centers. Reservations have sold out immediately everywhere StoryCorps has visited. Selected StoryCorps stories air weekly on the NPR newsmagazine “Morning Edition.” In addition to the cities on the Griot tour, over the next several months StoryCorps will also visit the following cities: Houston, TX; Jackson, MS; Lafayette, LA; Columbia, SC; Fayetteville, AR; Richmond, VA; Kalamazoo, MI; Hartford, CT.

StoryCorps Griot Tour Schedule - 2007

<u>City</u>	<u>Opening</u>	<u>Closing</u>
Atlanta, GA	Thurs 2/15	Sat 3/24
Newark, NJ	Thurs 3/29	Sat 5/5
Detroit, MI	Thurs 5/10	Sat 6/16
Chicago, IL	Thurs 6/21	Fri 7/27
Oakland, CA	Thurs 8/2	Fri 9/7
Clarksdale, MS	Thurs 9/13	Sat 10/20
Memphis, TN	Thurs 10/25	Sat 11/17
Selma, AL	Thurs 1/10	Sat 1/26
Montgomery, AL	Thurs 1/31	Sat 2/16

#